

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

ELLA MARIE SPILLMON,

Plaintiff,

v.

No. 16cv803 JCH/LF

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO,

Defendant.

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

THIS MATTER comes before the Court on *pro se* Plaintiff Ella Marie Spillmon's Application to Proceed in District Court Without Prepaying Fees or Costs, Doc. 2, filed July 8, 2016 ("Application"), and on her Civil Rights Complaint Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, Doc. 1, filed July 8, 2016. For the reasons stated below, the Court will **GRANT** Plaintiff's Application and **DISMISS** the Complaint **without prejudice**. Plaintiff shall have 21 days from entry of this Order to file an amended complaint. Failure to timely file an amended complaint may result in dismissal of this case without prejudice.

Application to Proceed in forma pauperis

The statute for proceedings *in forma pauperis*, 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a), provides that the Court may authorize the commencement of any suit without prepayment of fees by a person who submits an affidavit that includes a statement of all assets the person possesses and that the person is unable to pay such fees.

When a district court receives an application for leave to proceed in forma pauperis, it should examine the papers and determine if the requirements of [28 U.S.C.] § 1915(a) are satisfied. If they are, leave should be granted. Thereafter, if the court finds that the allegations of poverty are untrue or that the action is frivolous or malicious, it may dismiss the case[.]

Menefee v. Werholtz, 368 Fed.Appx. 879, 884 (10th Cir. 2010) (citing *Ragan v. Cox*, 305 F.2d 58,

60 (10th Cir. 1962). “[A]n application to proceed *in forma pauperis* should be evaluated in light of the applicant's present financial status.” *Scherer v. Kansas*, 263 Fed.Appx. 667, 669 (10th Cir. 2008) (citing *Holmes v. Hardy*, 852 F.2d 151, 153 (5th Cir.1988)). “The statute [allowing a litigant to proceed *in forma pauperis*] was intended for the benefit of those too poor to pay or give security for costs....” *Adkins v. E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co.*, 335 U.S. 331, 344 (1948). While a litigant need not be “absolutely destitute,” “an affidavit is sufficient which states that one cannot because of his poverty pay or give security for the costs and still be able to provide himself and dependents with the necessities of life.” *Id.* at 339.

The Court will grant Plaintiff’s Application to Proceed in District Court Without Prepaying Fees or Costs. Plaintiff signed an affidavit stating that she is unable to pay the costs of these proceedings and provided the following information under penalty of perjury: (i) her monthly income is \$684.00; (ii) her monthly expenses are \$6,251.00; and (iii) she is unemployed. The Court finds that Plaintiff is unable to pay the filing fee because she is unemployed and her monthly expenses exceed her monthly income.

Dismissal of Proceedings *In Forma Pauperis*

The statute governing proceedings *in forma pauperis* requires federal courts to dismiss an *in forma pauperis* proceeding that “is frivolous or malicious; ... fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; ... or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.” See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). “Dismissal of a *pro se* complaint for failure to state a claim is proper only where it is obvious that the plaintiff cannot prevail on the facts he has alleged and it would be futile to give him an opportunity to amend.” *Kay v. Bemis*, 500 F.3d 1214, 1217 (10th Cir. 2007). “In determining whether a dismissal is proper, we must accept the allegations of the

complaint as true and construe those allegations, and any reasonable inferences that might be drawn from them, in the light most favorable to the plaintiff.” *Kay v. Bemis*, 500 F.3d at 1217. The Court looks to the specific allegations in the complaint to determine whether they plausibly support a legal claim for relief, i.e. the factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level. *See id.* at 1218 (*quoting Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)). Dismissal of an *in forma pauperis* complaint as frivolous is not an abuse of discretion based on a determination that the *pro se* litigant did not state a viable legal claim and that the complaint consisted of little more than unintelligible ramblings. *Triplett v. Triplett*, 166 Fed.Appx. 338, 339-340 (10th Cir. 2006). However, “pro se litigants are to be given reasonable opportunity to remedy the defects in their pleadings.” *Hall v. Bellmon*, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 n.3 (10th Cir. 1991).

Plaintiff filed her Complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and named the University of New Mexico/Center on Alcohol, Substance Abuse and Addictions as the sole defendant. Complaint at 1. The factual allegations in the Complaint, in their entirety, are:

While being employed by the University of New Mexico in the department of CASAA (Center on Alcohol, Substance Abuse and Addictions, I was subjected to many forms of discrimination [sic], unequal pay, harassment, hostile work environment, retaliation and whistle blower abuse.

Complaint at 2. Plaintiff states she is “Requesting additional time to provide supporting facts.” Complaint at 3-4.

The Court will dismiss the Complaint against the County of Bernalillo without prejudice because Plaintiff’s Complaint fails to state a claim. Plaintiff’s conclusory allegations of discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment and retaliation are not sufficient to state a claim. *See Hall v. Bellmon*, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991) (“conclusory allegations

without supporting factual averments are insufficient to state a claim on which relief can be based . . . [and] in analyzing the sufficiency of the plaintiff's complaint, the court need accept as true only the plaintiff's well-pleaded factual contentions, not his conclusory allegations.”); *Nasious v. Two Unknown B.I.C.E. Agents, at Arapahoe County Justice Center*, 492 F.3d 1158, 1163 (10th Cir. 2007) (“[T]o state a claim in federal court, a complaint must explain what each defendant did to him or her; when the defendant did it; how the defendant’s action harmed him or her; and, what specific legal right the plaintiff believes the defendant violated.”).

Plaintiff may file an amended complaint within 21 days of entry of this Order. Failure to timely file an amended complaint may result in dismissal of this case without prejudice.

Service on Defendants

Section 1915 provides that the “officers of the court shall issue and serve all process, and perform all duties in [proceedings *in forma pauperis*]”). 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d). Rule 4 provides that:

At the plaintiff’s request, the court may order that service be made by a United States marshal or deputy marshal or by a person specially appointed by the court. The court must so order if the plaintiff is authorized to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915 or as a seaman under 28 U.S.C. § 1916.

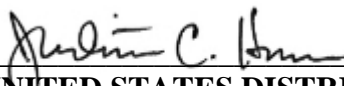
Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(c)(3).

The Court will not order service of Summons and Complaint on Defendant at this time. The Court will order service if Plaintiff timely files an amended complaint which states a claim.

IT IS ORDERED that Plaintiff’s Application to Proceed in District Court Without Prepaying Fees or Costs, Doc. 2, filed July 8, 2016, is **GRANTED**.

IT IS ALSO ORDERED that Plaintiff’s Civil Rights Complaint Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, Doc. 1, filed July 8, 2016, is **DISMISSED without prejudice**. Plaintiff may

file an amended complaint within 21 days of entry of this Order.


UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE